

Part 4

Human Rights and Social Issues

Human Rights

The United States continued its strong participation in the UN human rights mechanisms throughout 1997. The Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and the General Assembly provided opportunities for the United States to highlight its concern over continued violations of human rights in a number of countries. Independent expert David Weissbrodt echoed that message at the Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. In 1997, 126 resolutions on human rights were passed by the UNCHR. The UN General Assembly passed more than 60 human rights resolutions.

Resolutions addressing specific violations emphasized to offending countries that the international community will not stop its scrutiny of abuses. Thematic resolutions allowed the United States to enunciate policy goals regarding support of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and elimination of prejudice, racism and intolerance.

Commission on Human Rights

The UN Commission on Human Rights, which met in Geneva March 10–April 18, is the principal organ in the United Nations for achieving the Charter purpose of promoting respect for human rights. It is composed of 53 members, including the United States, elected for 3-year terms. Nancy H. Rubin led the U.S. Delegation.

The 53rd session was the fourth regular session following the creation of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. The United States joined consensus on a resolution on strengthening the Center for Human Rights. The United States continued efforts to persuade the Commission to rationalize the agenda by grouping resolutions on similar topics into a comprehensive omnibus resolution and biennializing certain thematic resolutions. The United States hopes that such reforms may make future meetings shorter and more efficient.

The United States drafted and successfully achieved Commission support for resolutions detailing human rights violations in Cuba, adopted by a vote of 19 (U.S.) to 10, with 24 abstentions, and in Sudan, adopted without a vote. The United States also supported an omnibus resolution con-

demning violations of human rights in the former Yugoslavia, also adopted without a vote. Additionally, the United States presented a positive resolution on the Middle East peace process, which was adopted without a vote.

The United States joined the European Union in strongly lobbying for a resolution condemning Chinese human rights violations. A Chinese proposal, which allowed “no action” on the subject, carried by a vote of 27 to 17 (U.S.), with 9 abstentions. The United States worked closely with like-minded delegations to adopt resolutions condemning human rights violations in Burma, Iran, Iraq, Burundi and Rwanda, as well as a resolution noting human rights advances in Haiti.

The United States cosponsored a strong draft resolution from the European Union on the situation of human rights in Nigeria, which was adopted by a vote of 28 (U.S.) to 6, with 19 abstentions. During Commission discussions on indigenous rights, the United States fought to gain a greater voice for indigenous organizations within the working groups on indigenous issues.

Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

The UN Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities held its 49th session in Geneva, August 3–28. Independent expert David Weissbrodt participated for the United States, in his second year on the Subcommission. The Subcommission considered cases filed by individuals and nongovernmental organizations against countries alleged to display patterns of consistent violations of human rights. In addition to confidential country proceedings, the Subcommission produced resolutions on the situations of human rights in the Congo, Bahrain and North Korea.

General Assembly

During the 52nd UN General Assembly, the United States played a leading role in obtaining passage of updated resolutions addressing country-specific situations. High points of the 52nd General Assembly were the U.S.-sponsored resolutions on the situations of human rights in the former Yugoslavia (Resolution 52/147), adopted by a vote of 133 (U.S.) to 2, with 27 abstentions; in Cuba (Resolution 52/143), adopted by a vote of 64 (U.S.) to 29, with 75 abstentions; and in Sudan (Resolution 52/140), adopted by a vote of 93 (U.S.) to 16, with 58 abstentions.

The United States cosponsored a number of thematic resolutions, including those on strengthening the rule of law, effective implementation of international human rights instruments, the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance and the rights of minorities. The United States continued efforts to biennialize resolutions.

Status of Women

Commission on the Status of Women

The 41st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) met in New York, March 10–21. Ambassador Linda Tarr-Whelan, the U.S. Representative to the CSW, led the U.S. Delegation.

The main agenda items were: follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; four priority themes—education and training, the environment, the economy, and power and decision-making; and the working group on communications. The Commission took action on four agreed conclusions, five decisions and eight resolutions; all but one were adopted by consensus.

The United States introduced a resolution entitled “Humanitarian assistance: mainstreaming a gender perspective,” but withdrew it after it failed to garner sufficient support. In its place, the United States included in the chairperson’s resolution on “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs in the UN system” a request that the Secretary General draw special attention to the full participation of women in all aspects of humanitarian assistance programs in his report to the CSW at its 42nd session.

The United States cosponsored two resolutions: Philippine’s text on “Traffic in women and girls,” which calls on governments to criminalize trafficking and encourages governments, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations to cooperate and facilitate the development of antitrafficking measures; and the G-77 text on “Older women,” which recommends that the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons include a gender perspective. The United States called for a vote on the G-77 resolution entitled “Palestinian women,” which the United States believes is one-sided in its criticism of Israel. It was adopted by a vote of 38 to 1 (U.S.), with 3 abstentions.

At the 39th (1995) session, the Commission decided to establish an open-ended working group at its 40th session with a view to elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The working group continued its work during the 41st session. At the end of the 2-week session, the Commission adopted the draft report of the working group and a draft decision that renewed the mandate of the working group for the 42nd session of the CSW.

By resolution 1983/27, ECOSOC reaffirmed the CSW’s mandate to consider confidential and nonconfidential communications on the status of women and to make recommendations to ECOSOC as to what action should be taken on emerging trends and patterns of discrimination against women revealed by such communications. It authorized the CSW to establish a five-member working group to consider the communications with a view to bringing to the Commission’s attention those communications which appear to reveal a consistent pattern of reliably attested injustice and discriminatory practices against women.

The report of the working group was presented at a closed meeting of the CSW, on March 13. It highlighted the communications received and recommended that, in order to provide continuity, the CSW should, to the

extent possible, nominate the same members to serve on the working group for 2 years.

Economic and Social Council

In its decision 1996/310, the Council decided that the coordination segment of its 1997 substantive session should be devoted to "Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programs in the UN system." The Council accordingly discussed and adopted agreed conclusions at its 1997 session which contained a definition of the concept of gender mainstreaming, principles for mainstreaming, recommendations for mainstreaming and institutional requirements.

The Council also adopted the report of the Commission on the Status of Women and took action on the CSW draft resolutions and decisions. All were adopted by consensus except the resolution on Palestinian women, which was adopted by a vote of 44 to 1 (U.S.), with 0 abstentions. (Resolution 1997/16.)

General Assembly Consideration

The General Assembly adopted by consensus eight resolutions under the agenda items "Advancement of women" and "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women." The United States cosponsored the resolution on "Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat" (Resolution 52/96), "Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls" (Resolution 52/99) and "UN Development Fund for Women." (Resolution 52/94.)

Crime Prevention and Control

The UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice is the principal intergovernmental policy-making body of the United Nations in this field. The Commission held its sixth session in Vienna, April 28–May 9.

Efforts to strengthen the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program (UNCPCJP) gained support at the sixth session as member states recognized the crucial role that this entity can play in strengthening international cooperation in crime prevention and criminal justice, especially in the area of providing technical assistance to nations. The UN Secretary General took a step toward assisting with this strengthening process when he named noted crime fighter, former Italian Senator and international criminal scholar Pino Arlacchi as Under Secretary General of the UN Office at Vienna (UNOV) and effective head of UNCPCJP in June.

Arlacchi is providing aggressive leadership in moving the UNCICP, more commonly referred to as the Crime Center, away from an academic oriented body toward one which provides technical and institution-building assistance and functions in a leadership capacity in fighting transnational organized crime and corruption. He hopes to attract police practitioners from several nations to provide active assistance to developing police and judiciary. Several resolutions initiated at the sixth

Crime Commission meeting were adopted by the UN General Assembly, buttressing his efforts. Resolution 52/90 specifically affirmed the high priority attached to technical cooperation and advisory services.

The sixth Crime Commission also adopted anticorruption measures and measures opposing violence against women. This Commission also sponsored, with U.S. support, one experts meeting on mutual legal assistance and another which began drafting a convention addressing transnational organized crime. The experts meeting on mutual legal assistance was held in Washington, D.C., coordinated by the Departments of State and Justice. The United States contributed financial support to the first meeting of experts on the transnational organized crime convention to be held February 2–6, 1998, in Warsaw, and will send experts from the Departments of State, Justice and Treasury. Additional meetings are planned during the seventh Crime Commission meeting in Vienna, April 21–30, 1998, and in Buenos Aires in the fall of 1998.

In fiscal year 1997, the United States contributed \$1 million to the Crime Center for three projects: implementation of a convention on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters among the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS); support to the national crime prevention strategy in the Republic of South Africa to combat economic and commercial crime; and institution-building and strengthening of organized crime control capacity in Romania.

Drug Abuse Control

The UN International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), based in Vienna, are the primary UN drug control organizations. Both are key organizations supporting U.S. Government drug control objectives.

With a budget of \$84.5 million in 1997, UNDCP, a voluntarily funded program with UN regular budget support, provided drug control assistance to 65 countries threatened by illicit production, trafficking and abuse. The U.S. contribution, provided by the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Matters, was \$9.7 million, for specific country and regional programs to target heroin production and trafficking, and for programs providing assistance in implementation of the UN drug conventions. U.S. assistance was focused on areas where extensive bilateral counterdrug aid has been constrained for political or logistical reasons.

Pino Arlacchi, former Italian Senator and crime expert, was appointed by the Secretary General to the post of Executive Director of the UNDCP, effective September 1, 1997. On November 1 Arlacchi was also named as Director General of the newly created Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention, established to address the interrelated issues of drug control, crime prevention and international terrorism. Under the reorganization, UNDCP continued to have the responsibility and leadership on all issues related to drug control.

During 1997 UNDCP gave renewed emphasis to supply reduction, particularly the heroin threat. UNDCP efforts led to a stated commitment by Taliban authorities in Afghanistan to ban illicit opium cultivation. With U.S. support and assistance, the UNDCP also engaged large opium-producing countries to take measures against illicit drugs.

Cooperation was furthered on transnational issues such as chemical control, money laundering and maritime cooperation. UNDCP efforts also helped ensure that governments complied with the UN drug control conventions, by providing assistance to countries in developing their national drug control plans and in taking legal measures. UNDCP developed closer partnerships in 1997 with other UN agencies in promoting drug control objectives.

A special session of the General Assembly devoted to the fight against illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and related activities, is scheduled for 3 days in June 1998. The special session, modified from the original proposal for a major drug conference, will mark the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the 1988 UN Drug Convention, and will focus on achieving full ratification and implementation of all UN drug control conventions.

The special session preparatory process began in 1997 through the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). The CND met formally in March, and subsequently held three informal open-ended intersessional meetings in Vienna, to address specific issues related to supply and demand reduction. U.S. Representatives participated in all of these meetings of the CND, as well as drug-related meetings of the ECOSOC (July), UN General Assembly (October) and a reconvened budget meeting of the CND (December).

At the regular March CND meeting, the United States presented resolutions on control of chemicals and stimulants, on maritime cooperation, and on government action to implement the 1988 convention articles focusing on law enforcement and judicial cooperation. They were all adopted by consensus.

The December CND budget meeting approved the biennial 1998–1999 voluntary budget for the UNDCP with a 30 percent increase overall. This was due to anticipated increased voluntary contributions and by drawing down the level of UNDCP reserves. Much of the additional resources will be for programs to target opium poppy cultivation and heroin production. The United States strongly endorsed the approved changes proposed by UNDCP in management and administration, including decentralization of responsibility and resources to field offices, cutting bureaucracy and streamlining program activities.

Coordinating UN Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance

A key U.S. priority over the last several years has been to enhance the coordination of UN emergency relief efforts. The United States strongly

supported General Assembly resolution 46/182, which established the position of Emergency Relief Coordinator; and ECOSOC resolution 1995/56, which recognized the differences and limitations in the capacity of UN humanitarian agencies to respond to emergencies. It also urged the governing bodies of the relevant agencies to review, during the 1995–1997 period, issues concerning the role and operational responsibilities as well as the operational and financial capabilities of their respective organizations.

Track II Reform Proposals

Throughout the year, the United States was actively engaged in reviewing and analyzing options to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including proposals made by the Secretary General, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and nongovernmental organizations.

On July 16 the Secretary General released his Track II reform proposals, which contained the following announcements related to humanitarian affairs:

- An Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, headed by an under secretary general, will be established at UN Headquarters.
- The Emergency Relief Coordinator will focus on the core functions identified in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs will be discontinued in its present form.
- Some of the functions of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will be redistributed within the UN system (e.g., disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness to UNDP; demining to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations).
- The IASC will be further strengthened and continue to be the main consultative body for humanitarian agencies, chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. An IASC Steering Committee will be established, with six members. (The idea of a steering committee was later dropped.)
- The IASC will be asked to identify measures to harmonize processes and further enhance the consolidated appeal process to ensure that appeals are needs-based and prioritized, taking into account the comparative advantage of each agency.
- In the field, a lead agency may be designated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to coordinate complex emergencies.

The Track II proposals also contained the following recommendations, which required action by the General Assembly before they could be put into effect:

- That the General Assembly designate the Emergency Relief Coordinator as the UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator, and transfer the Emergency Relief Coordinator's responsibilities related to the coordination of natural disaster mitigation activities to UNDP.

- That a humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council be established as soon as possible.

Economic and Social Council Consideration

In response to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56, members of the IASC became involved in a 2-year review of their roles, responsibilities and capabilities to respond to emergencies. The results of this review were contained in the Secretary General's interim report to ECOSOC. This report, however, was overshadowed by the Secretary General's Track II reform proposals, released July 16, the day before ECOSOC began its deliberations on agenda item eight: "Coordination of UN humanitarian assistance."

Because there was no time for a substantive review of Track II, ECOSOC member states agreed they would deliberate on the humanitarian assistance agenda item, but would not introduce or take action on any proposals. In their statements, several delegations, including the United States, made specific suggestions for improving the focus and structure of the UN's humanitarian assistance program. The United States emphasized the following:

- The Emergency Relief Coordinator should be supported by a group of senior staff seconded from members of the IASC;
- The link between the Emergency Relief Coordinator and humanitarian operational agencies should be strengthened;
- Streamlining of the Geneva office could be achieved by merging the Complex Emergency Division with the Relief Coordination Branch in Geneva;
- The Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator should not be involved in operational activities;
- The role of the IASC as the primary operational decision-maker for complex emergencies should be affirmed and strengthened, with a strengthened and impartial Secretariat to serve it;
- The roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Assistance and the IASC should be clarified; and
- Member states should have regular and frequent exchange of views with the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

During the summer and autumn, members of the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Assistance and the IASC met to put together a plan to implement the Track II reform measures. In November the Secretary General announced that Sergio Vieira de Mello (Brazil) would become the new Emergency Relief Coordinator, effective January 1998.

General Assembly Consideration

On December 19 the General Assembly adopted without a vote a resolution entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A program for reform,"

which took action on the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's Track II reform proposals. Resolution: 52/12 B:

- Designates the Emergency Relief Coordinator as the UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator, who will, *inter alia*, retain responsibility for coordination of natural disaster relief;
- Transfers to UNDP the responsibilities for operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness;
- Requests that the Secretary General to submit, before the end of the 52nd session of the General Assembly, a report on the method of financing of natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness activities beyond the biennium 1998–1999; and
- Establishes a humanitarian affairs segment of ECOSOC.

In addition to the reform initiatives, the General Assembly adopted several resolutions on coordinating disaster aid. Resolutions on the "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel" (Resolution 52/167) and "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (Resolution 52/168) were adopted without a vote.

Several resolutions related to special economic assistance to individual countries or regions (Resolutions 52/169 A–M) were also adopted. The United States joined consensus in adopting resolutions on the following: Democratic Republic of the Congo; Central African countries; El Salvador; Lebanon; Liberia; Central America; neighboring and other states affected by the sanctions imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; Tajikistan; Montserrat; Djibouti; Somalia; and Kazakhstan. The United States called for a vote on the resolution on "Emergency assistance to Sudan," which was adopted by a vote of 95 to 38 (U.S.), with 13 abstentions. (Resolution 52/169 F.)

ReliefWeb

ReliefWeb is the UN's premier Internet tool for reporting ongoing humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. ReliefWeb emerged from the pilot phase in October 1996 and was adopted by the UN General Assembly in resolution 51/194 as the "global humanitarian information system for the dissemination of reliable and timely information on emergencies and natural disasters." The General Assembly also encouraged all governments, UN agencies, funds, programs and other relevant organizations, including NGOs, to support ReliefWeb and actively participate in the ReliefWeb information exchange through the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

In 1997 ReliefWeb remained invaluable and also expanded its information-sharing agreements with the relief community, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Toward the end of 1997, it also began plans to place ReliefWeb on CD-ROM, which will make the system's data and maps inexpensively available in regions with little or no availability to the Internet. The prestigious Asia-Pacific Disaster Center in Hawaii agreed to be a

mirror image in Asia, and the Government of Turkey has agreed to do the same in its region. In addition, ReliefWeb began exploring ways to improve its maps, and created a "chat room" for use by relief workers around the world.

ReliefWeb has become a key substantive tool supporting relief, logistics, supply and contingency planners. It strengthens the capacity of all relevant actors, particularly in disaster- and emergency-prone countries, to receive and use information more effectively in support of prevention, relief and recovery. But ReliefWeb will also always be a work-in-progress, as the nature of emergencies is changing. The following are some key goals the U.S. Government has discussed with ReliefWeb, some of which will take several years to achieve.

Regions with inadequate Internet and telecommunications access need special help. One approach is to augment the Internet with CD-ROM products. Another complementary idea is to develop a network of regional information centers responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information between relief organizations and disaster-prone regions. This effort can exponentially increase the flow of especially large logistical databases, geospatial products from satellites and other data-dense reports; it can also speed the exchange of ordinary essential operational material. Future sites may include the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Latin America.

The U.S. Department of State has urged ReliefWeb to lead an international effort to standardize disaster information reporting. This effort should also stimulate more sharing of useful information in all relief languages. This has been a goal of ReliefWeb from the start. The year 1997 saw real progress, particularly at an International Symposium on the Role of Information in Humanitarian Coordination, sponsored by the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs in October 1997. Both in a special U.S. Department of State-chaired seminar and during the Symposium, State, U.S. AID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and U.S. Institute for Peace discussed various efforts aimed at helping ReliefWeb achieve this essential goal.

ReliefWeb is also designing a system of alerts to ensure prompt and effective humanitarian responses. Once implemented, this will be of great value.

Enhancing the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) early warning capacity is a key goal. Working with regional organizations like the OAU, OCHA plans to build focused information sets and reporting schemes that illuminate the root causes of natural and complex humanitarian emergencies. This will be accomplished in part by integrating the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) and the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) with ReliefWeb. IRIN is an OCHA-managed e-mail service in Nairobi that packages reports on events in the Great Lakes region, often before traditional sources. All of its

reports are posted on ReliefWeb. The project expanded in 1997 by inserting a new node in West Africa, a timely decision, given the events in Sierra Leone. HEWS provides early warning analysis reports to the Secretary General. Such reports are sensitive and should remain in-house. However, early warning indicators (not the reports) should be reported on ReliefWeb. The United States has also encouraged ReliefWeb to engage the entire relief community to develop a common set of indicators. Should this happen, all users could post basic data on ReliefWeb, thus giving the entire relief community a new tool for effective early warning analysis. This effort will probably take place in 1998.

ReliefWeb's worldwide address is <http://www.reliefweb.int/>. See also <http://www.state.gov/www/issues/relief/field.html>.

World Food Program

The World Food Program (WFP) is the UN system's principal vehicle for multilateral food aid, including emergency food intervention and grant development assistance. Established in 1963 in Rome under UN and FAO auspices, WFP uses commodities and cash provided by donor countries to support social and economic development, protracted refugee and displaced persons projects, and emergency food assistance in natural disaster or man-made crisis situations. The Program fed some 50 million people in 1997. With strong U.S. support, WFP has established formal working relationships with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and key NGOs, who often act as distribution partners in the field.

Aid for long-standing complex emergencies (in particular, parts of the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia, and sub-Saharan Africa) continues to strain WFP's oversubscribed resources. As a result, WFP currently spends over two-thirds of its resources on emergency and other humanitarian relief projects, leaving less than one-third for development activities. WFP development projects seek to improve agricultural production, rural infrastructure, nutrition and the environment. Mother-child and school feeding interventions are aimed at improving the nutrition and quality of life of the most vulnerable people. Food-for-work projects help build infrastructure and promote the self-reliance of the poor through labor-intensive programs.

WFP operates exclusively from voluntary contributions of commodities and cash donated by governments. For 1997 WFP garnered \$1.2 billion. The United States gave almost \$375 million: \$165 million in commodities and transport costs, consisting largely of \$164 million in U.S. AID-administered Public Law 480 (Farm Bill) Title II funds, an additional \$193 million from other U.S. AID resources and almost \$17 million via the State Department. Catherine Bertini, WFP's first American and first woman Executive Director, was reelected to a second 5-year term in March.

The United States is a member of WFP's governing board, the Executive Board. Agenda concerns continue to be dominated by declining donor

resources for development and burgeoning emergency and refugee populations. The United States has encouraged the organization to focus on its comparative advantage in relief and rehabilitation instead of development, which is better handled elsewhere in the UN system. In addition, newly prosperous nations are being encouraged to assume WFP's work within their borders, as WFP seeks to restrict its development assistance to the world's very poorest.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Executive Committee Action

The theme of the 48th session of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Executive Committee was "Repatriation Challenges." With the repatriation of refugees increasingly taking place in volatile or unstable environments, delegates discussed challenges such as repatriation under pressure or duress, repatriation in the aftermath of conflict, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction, and reconciliation.

The Executive Committee adopted four conclusions on international protection in general, safeguarding of asylum, safety of UNHCR staff and other humanitarian personnel and the needs of refugee children and adolescents. It also adopted a conclusion on "Follow-up to the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Conference."

Finally, the Executive Committee approved the revised 1997 general program budget of \$452,612,000 and the 1998 general program budget of \$440,000,000. The overall estimate for both the general program and special programs for 1998 was \$995,900,000. The Executive Committee's standing committee met five times in 1997 to discuss and provide guidance on protection, policy, management, finance and program issues affecting the organization.

The U.S. statement on the annual theme emphasized the need for burden-sharing by the international community, nonrefoulement of refugees, maintaining the civilian character of refugee camps, the principle of voluntary repatriation and the importance of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation to ensure that repatriation is durable. In a separate statement, the United States stressed the importance of protection and the need to adhere to fundamental humanitarian principles, reminding governments of their responsibilities in this regard, highlighting the importance of resettlement as a means of protection and burden-sharing and expressing concern about the vulnerability of women and children.

General Assembly Consideration

The General Assembly adopted five resolutions without a vote under the agenda item "Report of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions."

The United States cosponsored the following resolutions: "Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees" (Resolution 52/103), which focuses

on the need to pursue and implement durable solutions; “Continuation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees” (Resolution 52/104), which continues the Office of the High Commissioner for a further period of 5 years, from January 1, 1999; and “Follow-up to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighboring States.” (Resolution 52/102.) The regional conference was held in May 1996 in Geneva.

The United States joined consensus in adopting “Assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors” (Resolution 52/105) and “Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. (Resolution 52/101.)

World Social Situation

The 35th Commission for Social Development met February 25–March 6, achieving consensus on eight resolutions, including the agreed conclusions on the priority theme “Productive Employment and Sustainable Development.” The U.S. Delegation stated its reservations on the agreed conclusions, which did not adequately qualify the kind of child labor that should be eliminated, and rejected the formulation “equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.” (The United States observes the principle of “equal pay for equal work.”) Among the adopted resolutions were “International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages,” “Equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities,” which renews the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Disabilities for another 3 years, and “Implementation of the World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, including a World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth” (to be held in Portugal in August 1998).

The Economic and Social Council held its regular session in Geneva June 30–July 25. Key agenda items included a high-level expert debate on fostering an enabling environment for development, and mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programs in the UN system.

United States Participation in the United Nations